

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES MARCH 11, 2002

The meeting of the Commission was called to order by Chairman Bill O’Gara at 1:02 P.M. Members present: Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Jay Bradshaw, John Cannon, John Dean, Darrel Fournier, Al Godfrey, Randy Keep, Jeff Maker, Harty Norris, Bill O’Gara, Jethro Pease, Michael Quint, Dave Wacker, Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (Staff). Members excused: Jeff Cammack, Ted Johnston, Tom Parent and Christine Savage. Guests: Earle Welch, Jr. Asst. Fire Chief – Wayne, Gordon Webber Kennebec County Vice President – MSFFF. Inc., Carl Zerr Safety Officer – Fayette Fire Dept., John S. Martin - Fire Service Lobbyist, Rick McCarthy - Counsel to President Pro-tem, Gary Crocker Director of Federal and State Programs - Maine Technical College System, Charles Soltan - Legislative Lobbyist and Kelly Arata - Legislative Lobbyist.

The minutes of the February 25, 2002 meeting were accepted as amended on the top of the third page when Jethro Pease advised that the population of the Town of Morrill is 728 and not 684 as stated by him at the February 25, 2002 meeting.

Rick McCarthy, Counsel to the Senate President Pro-tem, presented a *draft legislative amendment* to the Commission to require the State Controller to transfer an amount up to \$982,943. from the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund after required deductions and transfers and as the next priority after the transfers to the Maine Rainy Day Fund, the Retirement Allowance Fund, the Reserve for General Fund Working Capital and the State Contingent Account to cover the operational funding shortfall of the State Fire Marshal Office and Maine Fire Training and Education. This amount is based on the excess General Fund revenue generated by the insurance premium taxes, the amount is the lesser of the excess revenue from insurance premium taxes or \$982,943. A general discussion ensued with several members raising questions and speaking in favor of the issue. Darrel Fournier admonished the Commission to continue to address the funding issues for the Health Care Program and Recruitment and Retention Program down the road as well as this very important piece of legislation addressing the immediate needs of SFMO and MFT&E. A motion by Jethro Pease, 2nd by Jeff Maker that the Commission adopt the position of moving ahead with the proposed amendment as presented by Rick McCarthy was approved by a unanimous vote.

A discussion then ensued regarding the *Commission report to the Governor and Legislature*. Darrel Fournier requested that injury rates and deaths by age be added to the report in the healthcare portion to help us make our case.

Michael Quint noted that he had just been advised by Rick McCarthy that the Commission needs to take additional action of the funding issues. A motion was made by Michael Quint, 2nd by Jay Bradshaw that the Commission authorize the *funding subcommittee* to write language to identify ongoing funding sources covering the second portion of the funding piece. The motion was approved unanimously.

The activities then returned to the *Commission Report* being finalized. John Dean advised he has additional changes in the Fire Marshal section and has given them to Susan Pinette for addition. Darrel Fournier requested that in the volunteer recruitment and retention section, losses in the number of firefighters in Maine be shown. This was

agreed upon. Jay Bradshaw represented the training subcommittee and outlined the housekeeping changes recommended at this morning's meeting. He will polish up the recommendations and forward them to Susan Pinette in the near future. Steve Willis will E-mail some paragraphs from the funding handout to Susan for addition to the Resources for Maine Fire Training and Education section of the report. These additions were discussed and several changes were made to better reflect what has taken place in the last decade. This was to have been done earlier as agreed upon, however, apparently fell between the chairs. The entire report was then reviewed and several small housekeeping changes were made. Susan will review the report in its entirety once all of the minor changes have been made to insure that it flows smoothly. As soon as the core group that has been working on the report has a chance to review these latest changes one last time the report will be published. It was suggested that state printing do the printing of the report and that it have a plastic binding as used in many reports. This can be turned around in only a few days.

Legislative Document No. 2148, Resolve, to Require the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to Report Regarding Methods to Improve the Recruitment and Retention of Firefighters and the Provision of Healthcare, reported by Representative Quint for the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission was discussed. This is nothing more than a housekeeping bill that will continue the current funding for the ongoing studies and the Commission will report the findings to the next session of the Legislature rather than to the current session that will be adjourned before the reports are ready. It appears that a public hearing will be waived and the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice will report the Resolve out as unanimous ought to pass for consideration by the entire Legislature. If there is any change in the current plan and a public hearing held, Commission members will be notified so that we can be in attendance.

Susan Pinette discussed *amending the current law* that has created the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission as relates to membership on the Commission. We are having a difficult time in obtaining legislative membership from the two committees that currently must supply candidates. There are a number of legislators very interested in serving on the Commission, however, are assigned to other committees and can not be candidates for the Commission positions. This suggested change is to be looked into and reported out at a future meeting.

The *next meeting* of the Commission will be held on Monday, April 1, 2002 at 1:00 P.M. at the State EMS headquarters conference room in Augusta.

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 3:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert L. Godfrey, Sr., P.E., P.L.S., C.S.E.
Secretary

